

THE POCAHONTAS TIMES

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CALVIN W. PRICE, EDITOR.

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More than three score years ago this country divided upon a sectional issue and a fearful Civil War resulted. The nation hung upon a thread for years. Thwarted ambition and hate caused the war. So nearly even were the sections balanced that it now appears that but for the fortitude of Abraham Lincoln, the United States would have ceased to be.

The South suffered for the mistakes of the politicians, and accepting the measure of punishment imposed upon her, she has triumphed over fate and carried the weight and glory in her history. In no other country in the world could a people have worked out their national salvation so well. The Southern people retained all the proud quality of their natures, and the North has been long suffering and kind. The result is seen in a nation greater than ever the dreams of the ancients could have imagined. The Civil War was a major operation on the body politic, but it removed the deep seated source of trouble, and the United States dates from the end of the Civil War her real greatness and prosperity. From a association of states loosely bound together, it emerged from the Civil War, a nation.

It is the duty and the pleasure of those of us who were born and bred in the South to show our ever increasing devotion to the Union. This week I find that I cannot write about anything but Abraham Lincoln. Each recurring year sees him more fully established in the hearts of his countrymen. He is beginning to be understood. The first words that were uttered in the room when it was seen that he had come to breath were: "He now belongs to the ages." These words were sad and prophetic.

I have seen this devotion to his memory grow. Fifty years ago it was not the custom to speak reverently of Abraham Lincoln. There were many heroes on both sides to occupy the public mind. But their lights have grown dim and faded, but Abraham Lincoln's fame glows and ever increases in effulgence. Before the war John C. Calhoun said that he never used the word nation in speaking of the United States. That would be strange language to hear today.

Lincoln in his lifetime had more kicks than halfpence. Some of his most severe critics were in the North. It is considered today that the Lincoln Gettysburg speech is the finest arrangement of words ever put together by the mind of man. But the great New York newspaper said the next day that our ungainly President spoke for a few minutes and made a bust of it as usual. And in the same issue of his paper he reported columns of Evert's speech on that occasion, which has long been lost so far as public interest is concerned. They never have been able to recognize literature in New York editorial circles.

The luncheon club had a Lincoln banquet at the local hotel the other night. The orator of the occasion was Douglas McNeill, the son of a Confederate captain, and there as a guest was Mr. Fickes, who was present at Gettysburg when Lincoln delivered the famous speech. Mr. Fickes confirms the fact that Lincoln did not read this speech. It was taken down in short-hand by the Associated Press and printed and sometime afterwards, Lincoln wrote it out in his own handwriting for a soldier's and sailor's fair in Baltimore, in 1864, but there are no material changes from the version printed the day after it was delivered. The occasion was November 19, 1863, when the soldier's cemetery at Gettysburg was dedicated. It is pretty well established that Lincoln had written the speech on the train as he traveled to Gettysburg and showed it to one of his friends at the time. It is said that Lincoln felt that he was not able to do justice to the occasion. Mr. Fickes says that his first sight of Lincoln was when he came out of the hotel to go to the meeting place. That he had been furnished with a small horse and that the President was so tall that he seemed to mount the horse without climbing. A platform had been built in the open air. The address is some three hundred words, and it has that peculiar quality of never getting stale in the reading. It endures like the holy writ. We give the address in full.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this."

"But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it never can forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion—that we are highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The quaintness of the address is that Lincoln should have uttered the

belief that the world would little note nor long remember what he said there. And that about immortal words that go ringing down the grooves of time.

A gentleman asked me the other day whether any persons went from this vicinity to hear Lincoln deliver that address at Gettysburg. So far as I have been informed there was none. Earlier in that year of 1863, at least a hundred Pocahontas County citizens made a trip to Gettysburg but owing to circumstances over which they had no control, they could not stay there. They one and all agreed on their return that they had received a warm welcome and that there was much excitement during the time they were there, but they had to come away. The late Robert McLaughlin declared that it was no contented place for him.

Lincoln got his start in statesmanship in his construction of the effect that a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States would have upon the history of the nation. The opinion of Taney, Chief Justice, in the case of the negro, Dred Scott, who sued for freedom on the ground that he had been moved by his master from a slave state to a free state. Taney held that slaves were to be considered solely as property, and Lincoln saw the distinction between property and the rights of persons held to service.

Lincoln practiced law in Illinois. He had served in the legislature and in congress but had not become a national figure. An election for senator was coming on in Illinois. Stephen A. Douglas was a candidate to succeed himself, and Lincoln came out against him and they had some debates on the question of slavery, Douglas taking a middle ground, and Lincoln arguing that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and warning the country that the effect of the Dred Scott decision was that unless the people asserted themselves that the next decision following that would be that slavery was lawful in every state. Either that or the ultimate extinction of slavery was the result of the question raised.

Lincoln was tall like Mutt and Douglas was about the size of Jeff, and they held joint debates. The moving pictures show Senator Douglas riding in a stylish carriage to the speaking and Lincoln coming on a big mule. They fought it out in the summer of 1858, and Douglas went back to the Senate, but he never had any luck after that. Lincoln is one of those men live who forever.

In the moving pictures, Lincoln is shown as a clerk in a grocery store. This is probably not historically correct. In his first debate with Douglas, there is an allusion to such a clerkship, but it is in the way of an invective. Douglas thought he was giving Lincoln a sly dig. He said Lincoln had been a flourishing grocery keeper in the town of Salem. This was to intimate in a polite way that Lincoln had sold whiskey, as whiskey was dispensed from grocery stores in those days. Lincoln disposed of this charge in a bluff way. He said that he had never kept a grocery anywhere in the world, and he did not know whether it would be any great sin if he had. That it was true, that he, Lincoln, did work the latter part of one winter in a little still house up at the head of a hollow.

It was in this debate that Lincoln speaks of a specious and fantastic arrangement of words, by which a man can prove a horse-chestnut to be a chestnut horse.

Lincoln is probably the only great man who was at the same time a great humorist. The two do not go together as a rule. Every humorist is a sensitive man and with the most of public men, they have to have the hide of a rhinoceros to be able to withstand the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

He was able to dissolve the clouds of gloom that threatened to engulf him, with shafts of wit. It saw him through the war.

In my mind three things stand out in his career greater than all things else. The emancipation of the slaves, the refusal to end the war, and the formation of the State of West Virginia.

The war was brought on by the slavery curse. It had progressed nearly two years before the emancipation proclamation went into effect. It is admitted now that if the President had issued the proclamation of emancipation in the early part of the war that it would cause the secession of such border states as Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri and that with the defection of these states the success of secession would have been assured. Lincoln had to wait and that was the harder to do on account of the persistent demand that he act. The same sort of waiting was required of Wilson in the great war, until the country was ready to support the proclamation of war.

The hardest thing that Lincoln had to do was to keep on fighting until the object of the war was gained. He was importuned from every side to end the war, and as Greeley insisted: Let the erring sisters go in peace. He would keep his head while all about him were losing theirs and blaming it on him. There was where Lincoln's soul was tried and where his fortitude prevailed. He saw the war through and lived just five days after the surrender.

One of the hardest war problems

was the formation of the State of West Virginia.

Following almost a century of congenial hatred between the mountaineers and the low lands, in which the mountaineers had gotten the rough side of the rasp in every particular, the secession of Virginia had caused the mountaineers to do a little seceding themselves. First Virginia seceded from the Union, and then West Virginia seceded from Virginia and Virginia contended that a lattercooler of that kind could not be played in the game.

The mountaineers operated under the name of Virginia for a couple of years. They elected a Fairmont lawyer, Francis H. Peirpont. Governor of Virginia, and the southern soldiers retaliated by burning his law library in front of his office door in Fairmont. Peirpont was ruling a broken state down at Alexandria, in the shadow of the nation's capitol when his friends wrote him that he did not have a law book left. They had burned all his law.

West Virginia had hard sledding in Congress, owing largely to the fact that Carlyle, one of the senators that the mountaineers maintained there took a violent stand against the bill. He no doubt had the vision of Virginia coming back into the Union as a whole, and the mountaineers ruling it with a rod of iron even as the slavery oligarchy ruled in the former days. But there were a lot of long headed mountaineers that could see Virginia coming back into the Union and dominating over the mountain breed, out voting and out niggering them on every issue. They remembered that it had got so that a mountain seer could not go down to Richmond and eat with his own knife.

And while freedom was being allotted to the people the mountaineers insisted on having their future assured.

It has been questioned whether West Virginia was a legitimate child or not. Most of the mountaineers have insisted upon the irregularity of her birth and made the most of it, but that is not the view that I take of it. Congress had passed the bill and it came up to Lincoln to sign. He asked for the opinions of his cabinet members. There for the proposition and three against it. Each opinion was written by an able thinker and worthy careful consideration. There are many close questions in the realm of logic. Slavery was one of them. Lincoln wrote the deciding opinion, and it is a great blessing that he did deliver a written opinion. For there have been all kinds of wild reports circulated about his action in this case.

If my view is worth anything, I have no hesitation in saying that I consider Lincoln's opinion showed the ability of a trained judge more than any of the other opinions. He wrote a short opinion divided in two parts. The first dealt with the constitutionality of the question presented, that is, whether the legislature of Virginia has consented to the formation of a new state out of a part of its territory, which was no new departure in the history of Virginia, when we consider that Kentucky, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and a part of Minnesota had been formed from Virginia's boundaries.

Lincoln held that the legislature of Virginia was a body chosen at elections in which the majority of the qualified voters did not participate, but held that no legal consideration is ever given to those voters who do not choose to vote, and he adds that it was a matter of outside knowledge that many of the non-voters were not only neglectful of their right to vote but that they were in open rebellion against the government, and that to consider them in the question was to hold that their treason against the Constitution enhances their constitutional value.

He then said the question of expediency was one for Congress and not for the executive but that he would not evade it. And he gives his reasons why he thinks the admission of West Virginia was expedient. He said among other things: "We can scarce dispense with the aid of West Virginia in this struggle; much less can we afford to have her against us in Congress or in the field. Her brave and good men regard her admission into the Union as a matter of life and death. They have been true to the Union under very severe trials. We have so acted as to justify their hopes and we cannot fully retain their confidence and co-operation if we seem to break faith with them."

And so West Virginia became a state. In the bright galaxy of states, she is the one entitled to claim that she has an individuality all her own, but that is a sore subject with us, for the other states are willing to admit it if we will consent to take the place of the black sheep. Our reliance in this emergency should be to so live that we will be sufficient unto ourselves. We cannot stop to do this in a moment for our trade in coal and other forms of wealth is so great that this trade must first be served, but at the same time we ought to be gradually erecting our own factories and other supply depots, so that more and more wealth comes within our borders.

When I think of what a fight Lincoln had in his life time, and the place that has been accorded to him since his death, it makes me wonder if there ever was a parallel in the history of the world. And his most sincere tributes ought to come from the Southern states who were conquered, forgiven, and taken back into full fellowship. There are two ways that the individuals came back. One glad to come with no mental or verbal reservations, and thankful for the chance. The other kind came with wrath and defiance, with sword unsheathed, and waving the bloody shirt, agreeing to the United States but insisting that the favor was bestowed by them, and that the United States was greatly blessed in getting back the old fire eater breed.

I belong to the tribe that came back with their hats in their hands, thoroughly convinced that they had been overcome by an honorable enemy and thankful to be taken back. I

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was born soon after the war, and I never heard a Confederate soldier say a harsh word about Lincoln. But with the bunch that I was thrown with, they were not so careful with the memory of Lincoln. But after the war some Union soldiers put up a flag on my grandfather's farm and some devilish girls including my aunt Nancy cut it down. In the family were five Confederate soldiers, survivors of six enlisted sons, and you ought to hear how those soldiers hastened to get that flag flying again. And that is the reason I know that we came back into the Union right and burned our britches behind us.

A few years ago I met up with a big mountaineer and he looked like he had fought a bear. He said he had had a fight with a better man than he was, and that they were good friends again.

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